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LINCOLN

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Young Folk's Library of Choice Literature

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

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LINCOLN.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

Abraham Lincoln was born in Kentucky.

When Abraham's father was a little boy, his father took him out there to live.

That was a long time ago. Kentucky was then only a great wilderness.

There were Indians everywhere. There were dense forests, and there were bears and foxes and wolves in these forests.

There was no city of Louisville then. No one dreamed there ever would be such a city.

But Abraham Lincoln's grandfather found a good place on one side of Licking Creek, and he built a log cabin there in the woods.

The cabin was near Fort Beargrass. Where Fort Beargrass was then, now is built the fine city of Louisville.

Abraham Lincoln's father, we must remember, was a little boy then. His name was Thomas.

He had two grown up brothers. They used to work with their father. There were two little sisters. They used to help their mother spin and weave.

First the father and the boys built the log cabin. Then they cut down the trees to make a "clearing."

They ploughed the soil and planted corn.

They were all very proud when their first crops came up. "We shall have a fine farm one of these days," they thought.

But one day when they were at work an Indian crept near.

The Indians hated the white men. They did not want them to spoil the forests.

They did not want them to build cities.

They were always on the watch to kill the white men.

This Indian wanted to kill this Lincoln family.

He had watched them for a long time.

This time he crept up behind the low brush.

He crouched very low. The white men did not see him. The Indian had a gun. He aimed it at the father and shot him dead.

One of the sons rushed into the cabin for his rifle.

The other son ran to the fort for help.

The Indian seized the little white boy, Thomas, and ran.

The big brother ran, too, and fired his rifle at him. His aim was good and the Indian

fell dead. The little boy ran back to his mother in the cabin.

The family had a hard time now. The boys all worked hard. They did their best to take care of the farm.

Even little six-year-old Thomas did his part.

There were no schools near the log cabin where Thomas lived. That was why the boy never went to school.

No one even taught him to read.

He grew up an ignorant man.

He learned to shoot and to fish. He could fell trees and build cabins. He could work on a farm, and he could make traps. But he knew nothing about books.

Of course the poor man worked very hard all his life. He was never able to "get ahead" in the world. This was because he had no education.

There are very few ways for an ignorant man to earn his living. So Thomas was always very poor. His wife taught him to read a little. But it is very hard for grown up people to learn to read.

He never learned to read well enough to read this little book even. I am sure he would have had to stop and spell out the hard words.

The poor man was very sorry that he was so ignorant. He knew that his lack of education kept him poor.

"No child of mine shall grow up as ignorant as I am," he used to say. "It is cruel not to give a child a chance to go to school. I will not be so cruel to my children."

Thomas Lincoln and his wife, later, went to live in a log cabin near Nolin's Creek.

Thomas was very proud that his wife could

read. She was very glad to teach Thomas to read. She hoped he might gain an education, even though he was a grown up man.

When little Abraham Lincoln was born, the father and mother thought there never was so fine a baby.

"He shall learn to read," said his father. "He shall learn just as soon as he is old enough. He shall go to school, too, if I can earn money to send him."

The little boy soon grew to be a fine little fellow. His father was very proud of him. He did not need to be coaxed to study. He learned to read almost as soon as he learned to walk.

His mother loved to read. She would read everything she could find.

Then she would tell Abraham and his brother and sister what she had read.

The three children would sit at her feet hours at a time while she told them stories.

But the family were still very poor. The father was always trying to find work. The mother worked very hard in the cabin and on the farm.

She often had to go out into the forests herself to shoot a bear, so that the children might have food.

She could dress the bear, too, and make the meat ready for the table.

By and by Thomas Lincoln grew tired of living in this clearing. He thought he could earn a living more easily somewhere else.

So he sold his farm.

He built a big flat raft.

He put nearly all the furniture on the raft. Then he started down the river.

Abraham's little brother had died. There

were only Abraham and his little sister now.

Abraham's father meant to row down the river into Indiana.

People had told him that farming was easy in Indiana.

They had told him the soil was very rich.

They had told him the crops grew very fast.

He, poor man, thought he might perhaps earn a good living for his family there.

Mrs. Lincoln and the two children waited in the old cabin for the father to come back.


They had a very hard time.

They did not have enough to eat.

Abraham used to set traps to catch rabbits for their food.

Early in the morning Abraham would go out and chop wood for the fire.

After quite a long time the father came back.



He had not a very happy story to tell.

His raft had caught on rocks in the river.

It had been nearly broken in pieces.

He had lost nearly all the furniture.

He had carried all that was left to a place in Indiana.

He told his wife it was a beautiful country.

He told her they would be very comfortable there.

So the family left the old cabin and started on their long journey.

There were no railroads. In many places there were no good paths, even.

Sometimes the father had to stop and cut away the brush so they could get through.

Sometimes he had to build bridges over streams.

Sometimes they had to wade across the streams.

Abraham and his little sister thought this was great fun.

I am afraid it was not fun for the poor, hard-worked mother.

At night the family slept on heaps of grass and leaves and pine twigs.

It was a whole week before they reached their new home in Southern Indiana.

They now gathered up the furniture that had been saved from the wreck and started in through the forest.

They found a beautiful sloping hillside. They went to work to build a house on the hillside. They built only a hunter's camp. It had only three sides.

Over the open side they hung bearskins to keep out the cold.

In one corner of the hut was a fireplace.

The fireplace and the chimney above were made of clay.

It was in this hut that the family spent their first winter.

Abraham was now eight years old. His father called him little Abe.

Little Abe's clothes were homespun.

They were very coarse, but they were warm.

He never wore stockings.

His mother used to make him nice warm moccasins out of bearskin.

He had a funny little cap.

It was made of coon-skin, and the coon tail hung down behind.

His mother made it for him.

He had leggings made of deer-skin.

Abraham did not like to shoot the birds and animals.

The first time he shot a bird he cried.

It seemed so cruel to hurt a bird.



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LINCOLN'S EARLY HOME.

But they were so very poor, there was no other way to get food; so the boy had to hunt and shoot birds sometimes.

When the family had lived in Indiana a year, the father built a log cabin.

Little Abe helped his father all he could.

They cut the logs all of one length.

They cut notches in the ends, so that the logs would fit over each other nicely.

Then Little Abe's father asked all his neighbors to come and help him raise the cabin.

The neighbors lived miles apart.

The next-door neighbor lived a mile away.

But these people were always ready to help each other.

Going to a "raising" was like going to a picnic to these people.

They had great fun. ✓

All the men, women, and children for miles around came.

They brought much of their own food. Then the man whose cabin was to be raised, provided a fine roast of bear or deer.

They would all sit down together at dinner time. They would tell stories and sing songs.

The children would have a fine time playing together.

It was the only chance they had to meet each other.

Of course there were no churches and no schools.

Little Abe had been to school once, for a few weeks, in Kentucky.

The father still hoped sometime to send him again.

But Little Abe was not growing up as his father had.

His mother taught him everything she could. And he read everything he could find to read.

The Lincoln family felt quite proud when their new cabin was "raised."

It was a rough little house.

There were great open places between the logs.

Little Abe used to lie in his bed at night and look out through the logs at the stars.

This was all very nice in the summer; but in the winter it was not so nice.

Very often the snow would drift in.

These open spaces were filled in with leaves and twigs and strips of board.

Still there were great spaces between the strips where the wind could whistle through.

Little Abe once borrowed a book from one of his neighbors.

He had read it until he almost knew it by heart.

At night he would take it to bed with him.

He would wake up as soon as it was light to read.

He could not afford time to read during the day.

He had to work all the time.

When he went to bed he would tuck the book in between the logs.

One night it began to snow in the night.

The wind blew hard.

It blew the snow in through the logs.

It covered Little Abe's bed with snow.

The poor book was spoiled.

Little Abe almost cried over the spoiled book.

O dear! what would the kind neighbor say?

How could he ever pay for the book!

Could he ever buy one like it for the neighbor!

But it could not be helped now.

So Little Abe took the book and went to the neighbor's cabin.

He showed it to him.

He could hardly keep back the tears.

He told the neighbor how it happened.

The neighbor knew the boy was telling the truth.

Already he had earned the name of "honest Abe."

"What can I do for you to pay for the book?" asked the boy.

"Will you work to pay for it?" the man asked.

"I will do anything for you," answered the boy.

"Then I think I will ask you to pull fodder

corn for me for three days," said the man.

"Then I can have the book?" asked the boy.

"Yes, you can have the book."

This was the first book Abraham Lincoln ever bought.

He used to tell about this book when he was a grown up man.

It was a life of Washington.

When Lincoln came to be President, he used to say that book helped to make him President.

Living out of doors made the Lincoln children healthy and ruddy.

But the poor mother could not bear it.

By and by she began to grow weak and sick.

At last she grew very ill and died.

Poor Little Abe! his mother had been very dear to him.

She had been his very dearest friend.

They used to talk and read together.

And now the poor boy was alone.

His father could not read, and his sister did not care very much for reading.

Poor Little Abe was very lonesome.

His mother was buried near the little log cabin under a big broad tree.

Little Abe used to go to her grave after his day's work was done. He would cry till he could cry no more.

He would try to think of all the good times they had had together.

He would try to think just how she looked.

He would talk about her to his sister Sarah.

His sister had to take care of the cabin now.

She cooked the meat and made the hasty pudding.

Very often the father would help.

The cooking was not very hard to do, I think.

For they had nothing but corn bread and meat and hasty-pudding.

But little Sarah could not do all the work.

She could not cook and take care of the house and make clothes for her father and brother and for herself.

So they all were very ragged in those days.

After a time the father brought home a new mother for these children.

This lady brought quite a good deal of furniture with her.

She brought a bureau with drawers in it.

Sarah and Abe thought this was beautiful.

She brought a great many dishes for the table.

The children had never seen so many dishes.

The new mother had doors made for the cabin.

She had windows made for it, too.

She had the walls filled in more closely so the wind could not blow the snow and rain in on the floor and the beds.

This new mother had three little children of her own.

There was a little cousin living with the Lincoln's at this time.

The little cousin's mother had died. That was why he was living with the Lincolns.


Such fun as these six children had!

By and by, a school was opened in this neighborhood.

All six of the children went to this school.

Little Abe had not been to school since the time when he lived in Kentucky.

He had gone to school only a few weeks then



He was the happiest boy in all the world now.

He was sure no other boy in the world had so much to be happy for.

His teacher soon saw that he was an earnest boy.

He used to lend him books.

He used to tell him many wonderful things about the world outside.

The new mother was good to the children, too.

She helped the boy in his school.

She would not allow him to be kept at home to work.

When Abe was a grown up man, she used to say, "Abraham was a good boy. He never gave me any trouble. He never said an unkind word to me. He always tried to help me."

And this is what Abe used to say of her:

"My new mother was always good to me. She was a noble woman. She loved me and my little sister. She helped me in every way she could."

So you see these two were good friends.

At one time the boy was given a life of Henry Clay.

He read this book over and over and over.

He almost learned it by heart.

He thought Henry Clay was a wonderful man.

When Abe became a man he used to say that Henry Clay first showed him that even a poor boy might become a great man.

Abe began to wish he might become a great man.

The more he read the book the more he longed to be a great man.

He studied now harder and harder.

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He knew he must learn a great many things.

Ignorant boys never become great men.

When he began to study a book, he would never stop till he knew it all.

Once two travelers asked Abe to row them across the river.

They gave the boy two silver half dollars for it.

It was the first money he had ever earned for his own.

He was so happy he nearly cried.

He felt like a rich man.

When he was quite a big boy, he went to a city in Kentucky.

While he was there, he heard a great lawyer make a speech.

He had never heard anything like it.

It made him want to make speeches like that himself.

He went home and told his boy friends about it.

They began to play they were great lawyers. They used to make speeches to each other. Nobody could make such fine speeches as Abe could.

This was where he learned to make public speeches.

When he became President people used to think his speeches were wonderful.

People have put them into books.

High school boys learn them to recite before their school-mates and teachers.

By and by, a man asked Abe to go down the Mississippi with him.

The man owned a flat boat. He used to carry cargo back and forth to New Orleans.

New Orleans was a long way from Abe's home

The boy was so happy he could hardly wait till it was time to go.

He thought he should see the world now.

He should see new cities.

He should find books and papers everywhere.

He should know all about the people of the world.

He learned a great deal about the world when he made this journey to New Orleans.

He meant, as soon as he was twenty-one, to go again.

By and by, Abe's father moved again. This time, he went to Illinois.

They packed all their goods into a covered wagon. The wagon was drawn by four oxen.

They were two weeks in reaching their new home.

They found a place where the soil was rich. They settled there.

Abe and his father built a log cabin.

It was like the cabin they had lived in in Indiana.

It was very hard for the family to start life all over again in a new place.

Then came a dreadful winter.

The snow covered the country, and no one could travel over the rough roads.

No one had ever seen such a dreadful winter in this state of Illinois.

They called it "the winter of deep snow."

The people suffered greatly during this time.

The snow and ice did not melt away until ploughing time.

The Lincolns wished they were back in their comfortable home in Indiana.

Abe was now twenty-one years old.

He had a right now to go out into the world for himself.

So he went down the river again to New Orleans.

After that he went into a store in a little Illinois town to work.

Everybody liked him.

He could tell stories that made people laugh.

He could always see the fun if there was any to see.

He was alway kind to everybody.

He would help everybody that was in trouble.

Once when he was working in this store, he made a mistake in change.

He took more money than he should have taken from a poor woman.

When the store was closed at night, he walked a mile to find the woman.

He told her his mistake.

He gave her back the money.

Abe soon became a great favorite.

Before very long, people began to hear about him all over the state.

He had become a brave, grand man.

The people who knew him loved him.

By and by, he was sent to the legislature.

He was beginning now to be one of the great men of America.

Then there came a great trouble in this country of ours.

The people wanted a wise man for President.

The people began to say, "Why not choose Abraham Lincoln of Illinois?"

And sure enough when election day came, he was made President.

He was one of the grandest Presidents our country ever had.

You will learn all about him and what he did when you grow older.

But don't ever forget that he was a poor boy.

That he went to school only a few weeks in all his life.

That he had to work very hard when he was a boy.

That he had only a few books.

Then you will know that any little boy may become a great man, if he will try as hard as Little Abe tried. ✓

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